

**Second
Edition**

environment

Includes
digital content



literacy

animals

kids

**New
& Updated
Material**

AIDS

**The Complete Guide to
Service
Learning**

**Proven, Practical Ways to Engage
Students in Civic Responsibility,
Academic Curriculum,
& Social Action**

safety

health

elders

disabilities

readiness

equality

immigrants

community

hunger

homelessness

gardening

Praise for *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*

“*The Complete Guide to Service Learning* has been my go-to resource for sharing ideas with our partner organizations and with anyone who says, ‘Tell me about service learning.’ Rich in information, ideas, and practical suggestions, this guide inspires and reminds me how important our youth are and what valuable contributors they can be. Cathryn’s book brings learning and service to life.”

—*Elaine Leibsohn, America’s Promise Alliance*

“How can teachers begin or support a service learning program in their classroom or school? What role does [service learning] play in the curriculum? What are the true benefits to society and to students? . . . Kaye answers these questions and more. Fresh insights, practical guidelines, and useful resources make this book essential.”

—*Curriculum Connections*

Praise for the previous edition:

“An informative book for those interested in creating or overseeing service-learning programs.”

—*Youth Today*

“A wonderful step-by-step guide with handy tips and practical advice. An outstanding resource, a must-have.”

—*Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*

“A rich resource.”

—*Library Media Connection*

“Cathryn Berger Kaye’s energy, commitment, knowledge, and compassion are an inspiration. *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* captures all of these qualities, along with her practical advice and years of experience in educating the hearts and minds of the young. Putting these ideas into action in your classroom will forever change the lives of your students and just might help change the world.”

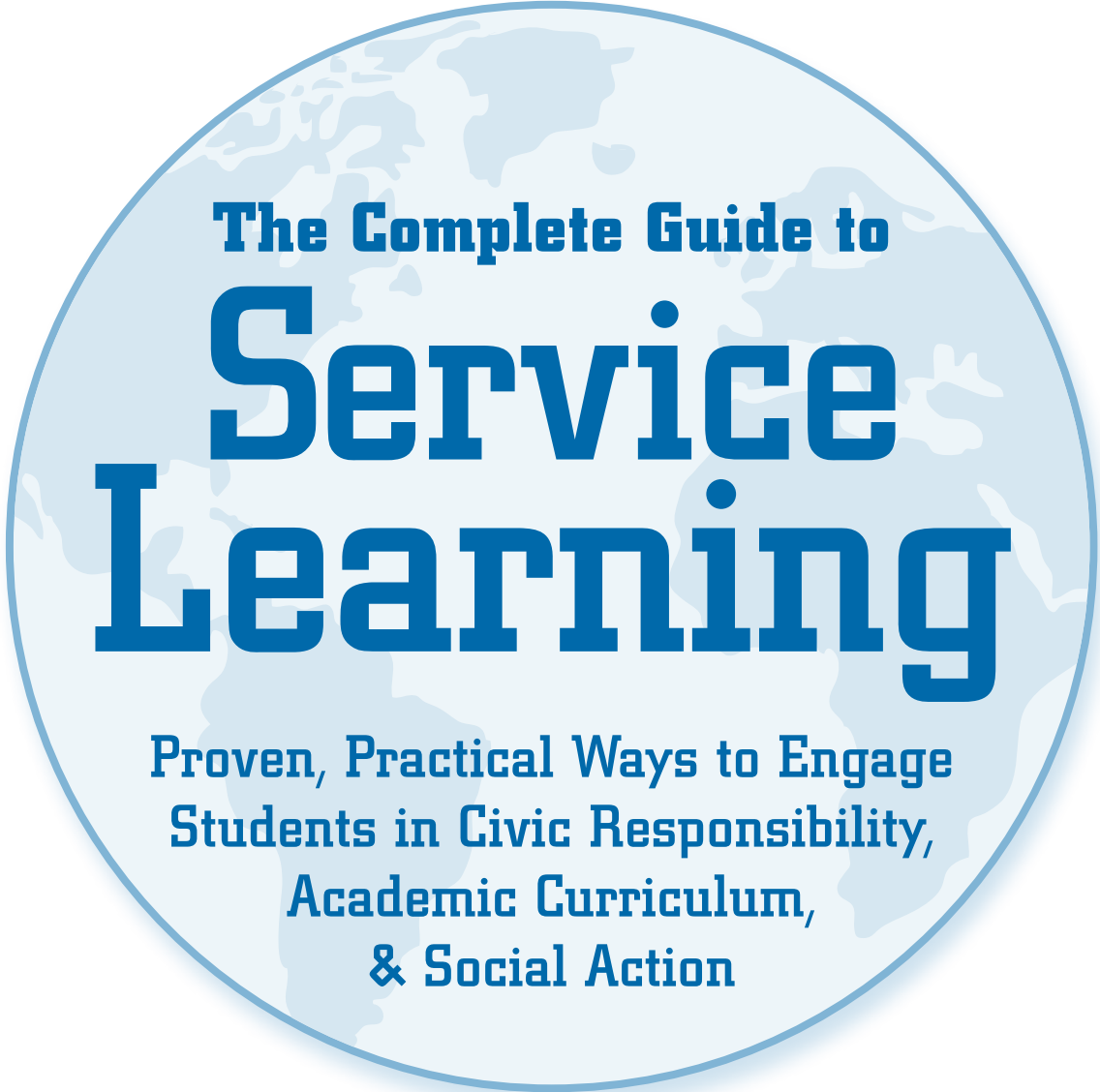
—*James Howe, author of Bunnacula and The Misfits*

“Service learning expert Cathryn Berger Kaye writes a powerful guide to invigorate students, teachers, and youth leaders. The practical service learning strategies and diverse themes will awaken and engage even the most reluctant learners.”

—*Denise Clark Pope, lecturer, Stanford University School of Education and author of Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed-Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students*

“*The Complete Guide to Service Learning* addresses civic and character education and service learning all in one work, at a time when renewing the civic mission of schools is becoming more urgent.”

—*John Minkler, Ph.D., author of Active Citizenship, Empowering America’s Youth, and Teacher Tools for Civic Education and Service-Learning, with Don Hill*



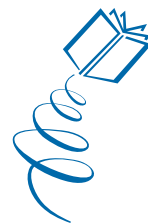
The Complete Guide to
Service
Learning

**Proven, Practical Ways to Engage
Students in Civic Responsibility,
Academic Curriculum,
& Social Action**

Revised & Updated Second Edition

Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A.

free spirit
PUBLISHING®



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DEDICATION

With great admiration, to the students and teachers who bring service learning to life every day.
And to my mother who always believed I could.

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Just as it takes a village to raise a child, a community has contributed to this book. This has been a journey of commitment and passion influenced by many in the service learning world. The following people made exceptional contributions. Truly, I thank you with a full and grateful heart. With special gratitude to:

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Contents

List of Reproducibles.....	viii
Digital Content	ix
Foreword	xi
A Word from the Author	
About This Second Edition.....	xii
Introduction.....	1

PART ONE. The Service Learning Handbook

Chapter 1. What Is Service Learning?	8
A Definition of Service Learning.....	9
Before You Start: Frequently Asked Questions.....	9
What Makes Service Learning Successful?.....	13
The Process of Service Learning: The Big Picture.....	15
An Example of Putting It All Together: Service Learning Meets the Canned Food 21Drive.....	18
What Next?	21
Chapter 2. A Blueprint for Service Learning	22
Getting Started: A Blueprint.....	22
Beyond the Basics: Advancing Your Service Learning Practice.....	33
Going Global	43
Curve Balls and Stumbling Blocks in Service Learning.....	44
Chapter 3. The Theme Chapters and the Service Learning Bookshelf	56
Getting Oriented: About the Thematic Chapters.....	56
About the Service Learning Bookshelf.....	58
What's on the Shelf? Features of the Service Learning Bookshelf	58
Using the Service Learning Bookshelf	64

PART TWO. Service Learning Themes

Chapter 4. AIDS Education and Awareness	74
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning Involving AIDS Education and Awareness	74
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	76
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	76
The AIDS Education and Awareness Bookshelf.....	80
Chapter 5. Animal Protection and Care	83
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning Involving Animal Protection and Care	83
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	85
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	85
The Animal Protection and Care Bookshelf.....	91
Chapter 6. Elders	95
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning Involving Elders.....	95
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	97
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	97
The Elders Bookshelf	103
Chapter 7. Emergency Readiness	107
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning Involving Emergency Readiness.....	107
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	109
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	111
The Emergency Readiness Bookshelf.....	113
Chapter 8. The Environment	117
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning Involving the Environment	117
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	119
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	119
The Environment Bookshelf	126

Chapter 9. Gardening	133
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Gardening	133
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	134
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	135
The Gardening Bookshelf.....	140
Chapter 10. Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices ..	143
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices.....	143
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	145
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	147
The Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices Bookshelf	151
Chapter 11. Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty	157
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty.....	158
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	159
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	159
The Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Bookshelf	164
Chapter 12. Immigrants	169
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Immigrants	169
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	171
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	171
The Immigrants Bookshelf.....	177
Chapter 13. Literacy	183
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Literacy.....	183
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	185
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	185
The Literacy Bookshelf	191

Chapter 14. Safe and Strong Communities	197
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Safe and Strong Communities.....	197
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	199
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	199
The Safe and Strong Communities Bookshelf	204
Chapter 15. Social Change: Issues and Action	211
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Social Change: Issues and Action	212
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	213
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	215
The Social Change: Issues and Action Bookshelf.....	219
Chapter 16. Special Needs and Disabilities	228
Preparation: Getting Ready for Service Learning	
Involving Special Needs and Disabilities	228
Making Connections Across the Curriculum.....	231
Service Learning Scenarios: Ideas for Action.....	231
The Special Needs and Disabilities Bookshelf.....	233

PART THREE. A Culture of Service

Chapter 17. Creating a Culture of Service	238
Why a Culture of Service Learning?.....	238
Growing Service Learning at Your School	245
An Author's Reflection	255
Resources	257
Index	261
About the Author	275



List of Reproducibles

Chapter 2

Establishing Curricular Connections:
Points of Entry 47

K–12 Service-Learning Standards for
Quality Practice..... 47

The Five Stages of Service Learning 47

Service + Learning = Service Learning 48

Planning for Service Learning..... 48

Planning for Service Learning Example
(Elementary) 48–49

Planning for Service Learning Example
(Middle School) 49

Planning for Service Learning Example
(High School)..... 49–50

Planning for Service Learning Example
(Special Needs)..... 50

Getting Ready for Personal Inventory..... 50–51

Personal Inventory 51

Gathering Information About a
Community Need 51

Who Is Helping?..... 52

Taking Action 52

Service Learning Proposal 52

Our Service Plan 53

Community Contact Information 53

Promotion—Turning Ideas into Action 53

Capture the Action 53

Progress Monitoring 54

Sequence for Reflection 54

Four Square Reflection Tool..... 54

Community Response 54

Once You Know It, Show It! 55

Assessment for Service Learning: Part One 55

Assessment for Service Learning: Part Two 55

Student Self-Evaluation 55

Across the Curriculum (blank) Digital content only

Chapter 3

Literature Circle Roles 72

Literature Circle 72

Quotable Quotes 72

Chapter 17

Benefits of Service Learning 252

Clarifying Roles for Success with Service Learning.... 252

Building Foundations for Service Learning..... 252

Establishing Curricular Connections..... 253

Increasing Youth Voice and Choice 253

Encouraging Teachers to Be Involved 253

Parent Involvement in Service Learning..... 253

Establishing Authentic Community Partnerships..... 254

Service Learning: Knowing the Terms 254

A Brief Step-by-Step Guide to Service Learning 254

Service Learning Vocabulary 254

Digital Content

Forms from the Book

See List of Reproducibles on page viii.

Bonus Materials (in digital content *only*)

Planning for Service Learning Examples

Elementary, AIDS Education and Awareness

Middle School, AIDS Education and Awareness

High School, AIDS Education and Awareness

Elementary, Animal Protection and Care

Middle School, Animal Protection and Care

High School, Animal Protection and Care

Elementary, Elders

Middle School, Elders

High School, Elders

Elementary, Emergency Readiness

Middle School, Emergency Readiness

High School, Emergency Readiness

Elementary, The Environment (*see Forms from the Book*)

Middle School, The Environment

High School, The Environment

Elementary, Gardening

Middle School, Gardening

High School, Gardening

Elementary; Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices

Middle School; Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices

High School; Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices

Elementary; Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty

Middle School; Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty

High School; Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty

Elementary, Immigrants

Middle School, Immigrants (*see Forms from the Book*)

High School, Immigrants

Elementary, Literacy

Middle School, Literacy

High School, Literacy (*see Forms from the Book*)

Elementary, Safe and Strong Communities

Middle School, Safe and Strong Communities

High School, Safe and Strong Communities

Elementary, Social Change: Issues and Action

Middle School, Social Change: Issues and Action

High School, Social Change: Issues and Action

Elementary, Special Needs and Disabilities

Middle School, Special Needs and Disabilities (*see Forms from the Book*)

High School, Special Needs and Disabilities

Interviews with Authors: The Story Behind the Story

AIDS Education and Awareness

James Cross Giblin

Allan Stratton

Animal Protection and Care

Kathe Koja

Elders

Eve Bunting

Richard Michelson

Eileen Spinelli



Emergency Readiness

Danica Novgorodoff
Dana Reinhardt

The Environment

Laurie David
Don Madden

Gardening

Pat Brisson

Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices

Jordan Sonnenblick

Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty

Lindsay Lee Johnson
Marion Hess Pomeranc

Immigrants

Francisco Jiménez
Tony Johnston

Literacy

Janet Tashjian
Jake Tashjian
Ann Whitehead Nagda

Safe and Strong Communities

Sharleen Collicott
Phillip Hoose
James Howe
Jerry Spinelli

Social Change: Issues and Action

Deborah Ellis
Sonia Levitin
Diana Cohn

Special Needs and Disabilities

Ellen Senisi
Cynthia Lord

Voices from the Field

(Note: Brief excerpts of these essays are included in the book)

Building the Sustainable Service Learning Partnership
by Susan A. Abravanel

Creating a Culture of Service Through Collaboration
by Roser Batlle

Creating and Supporting a Culture of Service Through Professional Development
by Anne Thidemann French

District-Wide Implementation: Character and Service
by Ada Grabowski

Getting Started in the Process of Creating a Culture of Service: Developing Service Learning in a Texas School District
by Mike Hurewitz

A Local Service Learning Association
by Cathryn Berger Kaye and Donna Ritter

The Legacy Project: From Student Voice Comes a Transformative Model
by Ron Perry

Mission and Coordination: An Independent School Perspective
by Nan Peterson

Youth Empowerment to Create a District-Wide Culture of Service
by Evelyn Robinson

Urban Service learning
by Jon Schmidt

Additional Bookshelf Titles

(Note: These lists include Recommendations from the Field.)

The AIDS Education and Awareness Bookshelf

The Animal Protection and Care Bookshelf

The Elders Bookshelf

The Environment Bookshelf

The Gardening Bookshelf

The Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices Bookshelf

The Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Bookshelf

The Immigrants Bookshelf

The Literacy Bookshelf

The Safe and Strong Communities Bookshelf

The Social Change: Issues and Action Bookshelf

The Special Needs and Disabilities Bookshelf

Foreword

In a world and in schools beset with challenges, service learning is increasingly recognized as an effective solution. How can this be? How can a mere teaching and learning strategy improve education and also address global issues like literacy, war, social justice, climate change, and poverty? The answer lies in what happens during effective service learning and in the impacts the cumulative experiences have on both those who are serving and those who are served.

In school- or community-based service learning, young people investigate issues and then design, implement, reflect on, and tell or teach others about how they have met real-world needs. They help younger children learn reading, math, or science; raise awareness about violence and teen pregnancy prevention; create community gardens to feed people who are homeless; capture important histories and voices that previously have not been heard; design and demonstrate ways to conserve energy; show communities how to prepare for and respond to disasters; and work with officials to improve their schools, towns, nations, and the world.

Through these diverse and meaningful experiences, young people apply knowledge, skills, and behaviors they need to learn, while designing and performing service projects. This confluence of learning and service is the defining characteristic of service learning and what distinguishes it from other types of giving. The secret about service learning is the reciprocity: it is designed to help the server as well as the served.

Research shows that well-designed service learning, in addition to addressing identified needs, results in positive academic, social, civic, and skill development for participating youth. Young people crave opportunities to make a difference. They leap at the chance to use what they are learning in classrooms in ways that help others, to get away from their desks and involved in their communities, to have their voices heard by adults, and to explore careers. They are more likely to come to school and learn when these opportunities are offered. The surprise is that more schools and youth-serving community organizations took so long to make this discovery!

You are a discoverer, and you are on to something big in finding this book, which can help you initiate, expand,

or sustain youth service learning. When the first edition of Cathryn's *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* was published in 2004, it instantly became the go-to reference and guidebook in the field, embraced by practitioners across the country as well as internationally. With its clear definitions, examples, reproducible forms, easy-to-use planning suggestions, and ideas for focusing service learning on a wide range of topics and needs, the *Guide* became an indispensable tool. This second edition retains all those practical resources and adds many more. Integrating the new K–12 quality standards for the teaching of service learning, the updated *Guide* has been supplemented with new themes, scenarios, book titles, author interviews, reproducible forms, and ideas for encouraging global literacy and creating a culture of service.

Service learning has evolved far beyond the latest fad to come along in education and youth development. It is not merely one more “thing” that must be added to the countless other “things” educators must contend with. Rather, it is a marvelously flexible strategy for educators to better teach students about themselves and the world, while meeting existing academic objectives. Service learning can be and has been implemented as a teaching methodology in every subject and grade level and is equally effective outside the school context.

Cathryn Berger Kaye has been deeply engaged in all aspects of service learning as a teacher; a local, state, national, and international service learning program developer and advisor; and as one of the nation's leading service learning trainers. She helped shape how service learning is defined and paved the way in helping us recognize the essential roles that literature and demonstration play in effective projects.

The new *Guide* puts all the pieces together for you. This resource can give you what you need to take that first, second, or twentieth step in combining service with learning to help improve children, schools, communities, our nation, and our global society.

Joe Follman

Director, Florida Learn & Serve: A Project of the Florida Department of Education and Florida State University's Center for Leadership and Civic Education

A Word from the Author About This Second Edition

Have you noticed? We are experiencing a global groundswell of service. The issues we face as a planet have now risen to a level that calls more of us to action. Through service learning, we can engage our young people in learning about and addressing critical issues—climate change, population migration, hunger, loss of habitat, illiteracy, and more—while contributing to the betterment of themselves and others. Young people, who are cognizant of the issues and have the problem-solving abilities to address them, matter. Providing them with the skills and knowledge to do this vital work, in their own communities and the larger world, adds relevance to their education. That is why I originally wrote this book and why it's been updated, revised, and expanded.

The first edition reflected my experiences as an educator who spent years integrating service learning in my classroom and assisting others across the United States as a program designer and presenter on the subject. Over decades of working with students, teachers, principals, schools, youth groups, and community leaders, I have continued to develop and refine the practice of this pedagogy. Service learning improves the delivery of knowledge and skills to students, and involves so much more than merely tacking on projects to existing lesson plans. It is a preeminent blend of practical methods that inform, involve, inspire, and move young people to be true students, seekers of knowledge, and active participants in our society.

Teachers confirm that with service learning, their students go beyond required assignments, reveal hidden talents, apply themselves in ways that stretch their intellect, retain what they have learned, and transfer the skills and knowledge to new situations. With academic-rich service learning experiences, students are doing astounding work as they prepare our communities for emergencies, repair our coral reefs, protect animals, construct monuments to honor our veterans, and spend time with otherwise lonely elders.

The field of service learning has evolved since this book's original publication, and I've infused new ideas, new resources, and new possibilities into the second edition. What's new in this edition?

- The K–12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice
- Discussion of the Five Stages of Service Learning and their importance in the service learning process
- Two additional thematic chapters that reflect current issues and describe how young people are responding: Emergency Readiness and Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices
- A chapter entitled Creating a Culture of Service, which provides ideas and resources to advance your service learning practice and increase its viability within your school, district, or organization
- New and updated forms, including Getting Ready for Personal Inventory, Gathering Information About a Community Need, Progress Monitoring, and Literature Circles
- Additional K–12 service learning scenarios for readers to draw upon and be inspired to action
- Updated Web resources for every thematic chapter
- Updated service learning resource listings
- New titles on every thematic bookshelf, including recently published books, to infuse literature and literacy into the service learning process
- New author interviews that demystify the writing process and inspire students to become writers
- Digital content packed with customizable forms, more recommended book listings, author interviews, and “Voices from the Field” essays from service learning professionals providing insights about advancing service learning (see pages 4–5 for more details)

Your engagement in high quality service learning prepares the young people you reach and teach to be the best students they can be, and to be valued contributors to our collective well-being, now and in the future. For all you do, I am most grateful.

Introduction

At a service learning workshop in the mid-1980s, I asked twelve teachers to think back to their earliest memories of service—of giving service, receiving service, or observing service. They willingly shared images of visiting retirement homes with a youth group, collecting money for UNICEF, working in a hospital as a high school student, and tutoring a young neighbor who was struggling with reading. One woman described living in a rural community with few financial resources. Still, her mother prepared food each week that her father loaded onto the back of their pickup to deliver to families whose needs were more urgent than their own. She described watching this and wondering, “Why are they giving away our food?” She paused, reflecting. Then she said, “Maybe that’s why I take care of foster children. Maybe that’s why I’m a teacher.”

I have continued asking this question over the years and I continue to find a connection between people’s early personal experiences and memories of service and their later choice to become teachers or otherwise work with children. Teachers—along with others who work in service professions—clearly have a natural affinity with service learning. Part of what draws us into this career is the opportunity to reach children and make a lasting—even profound—difference in their lives. Service learning provides deep and wondrous ways for this to happen.

My own experience with service learning began long before the term was commonly used. I was teaching in a very small school in rural Maine. One morning, a seventh-grade student brought in a newspaper article.

“That’s my street,” she announced, pointing at the photograph. “See that tree? It’s two houses away.”

“What’s wrong with the tree?” another student asked her.

“Dutch elm disease.”

None of us was familiar with the term, but by the end of the day, we had all learned quite a bit about this disease that threatened the magnificent elms in our neighborhoods. The students wanted to get involved. Before long, they were making phone calls to the

state and local departments of agriculture and were directed to a science department at the local university. Within a week, they were trained in assessing elm trees. Clipboards in hand, they traveled from street to street diagnosing and reporting on the condition of each tree.

Suddenly, subjects came alive for our middle and high school students. The study of plant cells took on new meaning. In math classes, record-keeping methods, statistics, and percentages gained an importance they had not had before. Students described their excitement and frustrations in journals and stories with feedback from other students and teachers. As a culmination of their work, students submitted their findings to state agencies and made a summary presentation to a college class.

The students couldn’t save every tree, of course, however they did help protect some of the majestic elms. Along the way, they learned and practiced scientific reporting methods, became aware of the roles of state officials, and developed partnerships with college students. Motivated by a sense of purpose, our students identified themselves as community activists and came to speak with ease about civic responsibility.

You should know that the education of the heart is very important. This will distinguish you from others. Educating oneself is easy, but educating ourselves to help other human beings to help the community is much more difficult.

—César E. Chávez, *social activist*

Since my first experience with service learning, I have worked as a classroom teacher, developed programs nationally and internationally, assisted with advancing service learning in teacher preparation and certification efforts, stood before all sizes of groups when presenting a conference keynote or interactive session, and served as a leader of educational workshops for districts and schools. *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* reflects my experiences both as an

educator, who presents about service learning and develops and refines its concepts and practices, and as a student, who acquires new ideas from the people I meet.

The desire to incorporate service learning into education is growing exponentially across the globe. Teachers improve their delivery of knowledge and skills and become enlivened by the high level of student engagement that integrated service learning provides. Students make the essential connections that bring forth the best they have to offer and help them create meaningful, relevant experiences. Service learning is truly a win-win for all involved.

Why Is Service Learning Important?

You may approach service learning for many different valid reasons. Perhaps you're drawn to service learning based on experiences you had as a student or due to personal or community values. You may want to introduce service learning to your classroom or school after hearing about the many ways students become motivated and engaged by this hands-on teaching method. You may approach service learning to respond to specific community needs or concerns or to promote involvement with social justice issues. You may have seen the success of a colleague, heard an inspiring speaker, or read a news article that chronicled how kids took what they learned in a classroom and used their knowledge and skills for the benefit of others. Many educators see the direct link between service learning and civic responsibility, literacy, social and emotional development, and improved school culture and climate. Or perhaps you're responding to school or district requirements for incorporating service learning into curriculum and teaching methods, and you want to maximize the benefits for all involved. Regardless of which scenario seems most familiar to you, you'll likely find yourself asking—or answering—the question, “Why is service learning important?”

- Service learning provides meaningful ways for students, teachers, administrators, and community agencies and members to move together with deliberate thought and action toward a common purpose that has reciprocal benefits.

- Students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally; develop skills; explore numerous career options; and may come to appreciate the value of civic responsibility and actively participating in their community.
- Teachers make school and education more relevant for their students, often seeing students blossom and develop previously untapped strengths in the process; collaborate with their colleagues and community partners to develop exciting curriculum; and may find themselves professionally reenergized.
- School administrators may observe a boost in staff and student morale as desired academic outcomes are achieved, and the school's profile is raised in the community.
- Parents find new avenues for conversation with their children, and may help support service learning within the school and create family service experiences.
- Community partners receive much needed help and may find themselves learning from the students as they teach or interact with them.

An entire community benefits by encouraging and supporting its students' thoughtful civic involvement and participation. Young people are acknowledged and see themselves as resourceful, knowledgeable, agents of change who can harness their curiosity, creativity, ideas, energy, and enthusiasm to benefit us all.

The beauty of service learning is that something real and concrete occurs. Learning takes on new and multiple dimensions. When students engage intellectually and emotionally with a topic, they can light up with a revelation or connect two previously separate ideas. What they've learned in school suddenly matters and engages their minds and hearts. Teachers also frequently respond enthusiastically to service learning, finding their students' eagerness and curiosity invigorating. Education becomes relevant, as classroom extends to the larger community. Math, science, social studies, languages, literature, the arts, technology—all are applied, used, and placed in contexts where they really matter.

In addition to the educational benefits, our society depends on active participation of its members to thrive. Our acts of service can shape the society we live in. Even young children marvel at how their thinking and planning and doing makes a difference. Service learning enables a wealth of small and large “differences” to happen. Relationships develop between people with an attendant understanding and appreciation for similarities and differences. Eyes become accustomed to looking for needs in the community and recognizing opportunities for change.

Even though service learning is exciting for teachers as well as students, you may feel daunted by the idea of integrating service learning into an increasingly complicated curricular mix. If so, you’re not alone. Often teachers arrive at one of my service learning workshops tired and frustrated by the newest set of mandates to arrive on their desks. Then, as they hear of their colleagues in schools across the country who try service learning and use it again and again, something happens. They see the real possibilities to meet academic standards, improve literacy, increase test scores, and enjoy their profession while they enhance and strengthen their ability as educators.

The Research Is In!

Fortunately for the ever-expanding world of service learning, education researchers are actively exploring how service learning improves education for students and identifying the factors that are most compelling for successful projects and experiences. The Resources section of this book on pages 257–259 includes organizations that are portals for updates on research as service learning continues to thrive around the world.

About This Book

This book is designed to help you successfully use service learning in your classroom, youth group, or teacher education program. You will find ways to sow the seeds for a culture of service learning in your school, district, or community, or plan to initiate professional learning conversations. You will find ideas and strategies to build a strong service learning foundation, advance a well-honed practice, and be positioned as a service learning leader, as well as practical ways to implement

service learning with children of all ages. Thematic chapters cover a wide variety of contemporary issues that serve as jumping-off points for service learning. Some thematic ideas are likely familiar, others less so. All of the issues are important and the concepts and suggestions have been used in schools throughout the United States and the world.

How to Use This Book

This guide has three main parts, and it’s designed to be used in a specific order. Part One addresses the various elements of service learning, how to get started, and the different ways to use the theme chapters. Part Two is a series of thematic chapters. By reading Part One before moving on to the theme chapters, you will be prepared to apply the principles of service learning. Part Three is about advancing a culture of service within your school, district, or organization; read this chapter when you are ready to expand and grow service learning.

- **Part One: The Service Learning Handbook**, includes three chapters that provide definitions and background information on service learning and describe the necessary components for successful implementation. Chapter 1 discusses the nature of service learning in detail. Chapter 2 gives you a blueprint for how to begin using service learning in your classroom and includes discussion and thumbnails of many reproducible documents and forms to adapt and use as you engage in service learning experiences or share ideas with peers. Keep in mind that the digital content includes all of these forms and more, so you can download them and complete them on your computer. Chapter 3 explains how to use the theme chapters and the service learning bookshelf—annotated bibliographies—included in each theme chapter.
- **Part Two: Service Learning Themes**, is made up of thirteen thematic chapters that will give you ideas for specific areas for action, including themes such as Protecting and Caring for Animals; Safe and Strong Communities; Poverty, Hunger, and Homelessness; Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices; and Special Needs and Disabilities. Each

thematic chapter includes preparation activities, a curriculum web to help you make cross-curricular connections, theme-specific resources, examples of actual service learning scenarios, and an extensive bookshelf of nonfiction, picture books, and fiction. Each thematic bookshelf is divided into topics; for example, the topics in the Environment chapter bookshelf are “Learning from History,” “Overview of the Environment,” “Natural Resources,” “Recycling,” “Appreciation,” and “Activism.” Nonfiction and fiction titles are identified by grade level. Books are also cross-referenced where they are applicable to more than one thematic chapter, as noted on an easy-to-reference chart. Every book title is annotated. Author interviews for select titles are included in the companion digital content.

- **Part Three: A Culture of Service**, includes ideas and strategies developed from my years of working within the service learning field and with a community of practitioners. This chapter includes supportive theories, strategies for meeting priorities of schools and districts, and ways to share service learning through professional development and in-service workshops. Suggestions for conversations can also be helpful as you bring other stakeholders into the process. Also included are excerpts of essays contributed by people working “on the ground” to promote service learning; the complete “Voices from the Field” essays are found in the companion digital content.

The book concludes with An Author’s Reflection and a general resource list to help you further explore service learning.

About the Bookshelf: The Important Link Between Service Learning and Literature

Books and reading are the basis of all literacy and learning, and I have found they are also essential to the service learning process. Over the years, I have read and gathered many outstanding and memorable books—fiction and nonfiction—that have an authentic connection with service learning themes. A well-chosen book can become the linchpin for an entire

service learning experience or unit, introducing students to relevant issues as they start working on their ideas and plans. Compelling books can keep them thinking about the implications of their endeavors and provoke them to reflection throughout. Both teachers and students gravitate toward a well-told story.

When I travel to lead service learning workshops, books pour out of my suitcases. These traveling companions enliven service learning keynotes and presentations as educators see the relevance and connections between the books, their students, and service that meets genuine community needs. I have included hundreds of my favorite books in the service learning bookshelf sections in the theme chapters of this book. Additional book titles can be found in the companion digital content.

About the Digital Content

The companion digital content to this second edition of *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* has abundant resources well worth exploring. The content can be downloaded at www.freespirit.com/CG2SL-forms. Use the password 2serve. Check out these highlights:

- **Customizable Forms.** All the forms discussed in the book can be filled in on the computer or edited and then saved to use again. This makes it possible to compile a database of completed planning templates and community contacts, and to adapt materials for specific audiences.
- **Planning Templates.** In chapter 2 on page 48, you will find a thumbnail of the Planning for Service Learning template. In the digital content, you will find thirty-nine completed examples—an elementary, middle, and high school example for each of the thirteen theme chapters in the book. These examples provide a guide for new and experienced teachers to make curricular connections, verify community needs, and follow the five stages of service learning.
- **Blank Curriculum Template.** Every thematic chapter has an Across the Curriculum web that models how service learning can deeply connect to and enhance learning objectives in all content areas. A blank curricular web is included in the

digital content, which is especially helpful in workshops (see page 249 in *Creating a Culture of Service*).

- **Additional Book Titles.** As you read the thirteen thematic chapters, you will find a theme-specific bookshelf in each. In the digital content you will find additional titles, including newly published books, old favorites, and books that may be out of print but still worth finding. You will also find the complete “Recommendation from the Field” books and service learning experiences.
- **Author Interviews.** As noted at the end of every thematic chapter, author interviews are included in the digital content. This edition contains eleven wonderful new interviews, plus updates and additions to the previous ones. Altogether, there are twenty-eight interviews, or “stories behind the stories,” for you to enjoy and share with your students and other teachers.



Printing a Copy of the Digital Content

To get the most out of the extensive rich material in the digital content, you may choose to print all the PDFs on three-hole-punched paper and add them to a binder with divider pages. In this way the digital content becomes a valuable resource on its own and an indispensable companion to *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*. Do you know a teacher looking for an elementary school service example involving healthy living, a middle school example of interacting with elders, or a high school example of emergency readiness? If so, you have dozens of Planning for Service Learning examples at your fingertips to share. Would you like to send the James Howe author interview to a colleague? Look in the binder. Are you leading a staff development session on curriculum connections? The blank Across the Curriculum template will be easy to find. Expect your digital content binder to be well used, just like this book!

- **Voices from the Field Essays.** Thanks to the growing field of service learning, the knowledge contained in this book includes additional advice contributed by current field leaders. Each essay is briefly excerpted in chapter 17; the full essays are included in the digital content.

Is Service Learning for You?

If you're a teacher, teacher in training, youth worker, group leader, counselor, principal, administrator, or parent who wants to help kids be more engaged and effective learners and take responsibility in their communities, *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* is for you. While this book primarily addresses service learning within a kindergarten through twelfth-grade school setting, service learning also thrives in many colleges and universities. Community organizations, youth groups, and after-school programs also use service learning to enrich their programs. Wherever young people's academic achievement and personal growth is the desired outcome, service learning is increasingly becoming the answer.

Above all, the purpose of this book is to encourage the practice of service learning—to offer a variety of ways you can integrate the service learning methodology of high youth engagement into different curricula so more young people will reap the benefits. Improving how we deliver academic knowledge and skills, while instilling the concept of civic responsibility and enriching educational opportunities for young people of all ages as they become engaged in social action is a gift to your students, your community, and yourself.

In reading this book, you will find that my commitment to service learning is deep. I am part of a dynamic group of countless educators, community members, writers, social activists, artists, and young people of every age who believe we are change agents who can repair, improve, and save this world—I stand with those who believe this is perhaps the finest work to be done. Welcome to the group!

—Cathryn Berger Kaye



Part One

**The Service
Learning
Handbook**

What Is Service Learning?

Simply put, service learning connects school-based curriculum with the inherent caring and concern young people have for their world—whether on their school campus, at a local food bank, or in a distant rain forest. The results are memorable, lifelong lessons for students and foster a stronger society for us all.

This is what service learning can look like:

- A teacher reads *Before You Were Mine* aloud to her first graders to prepare for a field trip to the local animal humane society. The trip is a central part of their studies about “our community.” After discussing the need to care for pets responsibly, the first graders decide to write and illustrate a booklet called “Taking Care of Your Pet” to hand out to students at their school and a nearby preschool.
- On a visit to a local elementary school, high school students demonstrate garden tool safety and soil preparation as they act out *The Ugly Vegetables* for second graders. During the next visit, the older and younger students work together to plant vegetables in a community garden, using math skills to measure and place the seeds appropriately. Follow-up visits include tending the garden and reading *How Groundhog’s Garden Grew*. The students collaboratively design and paint a garden mural to keep the plants “blooming” year-round. The harvested food is gratefully received by a local food pantry.
- Before students from a middle school English class tutor first through third graders in literacy skills, they read *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. Using the book as a springboard, the class discusses the feelings young children may have when they don’t read as well as their peers. The students write personal stories in their journals before and following tutoring sessions.
- In a civics class, students read *The Curse of Akkad: Climate Upheavals That Rocked Human History* as they develop a proposal for their school district to reduce the carbon footprint and save much needed dollars. They discuss how populations

across the globe are being displaced, the interconnection of our societies, and how being informed creates opportunity for constructive social change. Their resulting proposal to the school board is accepted.

- As part of a school-wide program to eliminate bullying and name-calling, all elementary classes read *Toestomper and the Caterpillars*, *The Bully Blockers Club*, or *The Misfits*. After various learning activities, students develop peacemaking strategies to create a safe school environment for everyone as part of National No Name-Calling Week.
- A teen youth group decides to learn ballroom dancing and recruits several experienced dancers, men and women who attend a nearby senior activity center. After mastering the basics of the fox trot, waltz, and east coast swing, the young dancers meet with the senior center staff and discuss ways to show their appreciation and gratitude for the lessons. The group plan and host a “Senior Senior Prom” attended by over sixty dancing seniors.

NOTE: Annotated descriptions of all books listed can be found in subsequent theme chapters.

This chapter is designed to give you an overview of service learning from common terms to the criteria that ensure success. An FAQ section will answer key questions to help you get started. You’ll be introduced to the process that constitutes the foundation of all service learning activities and how you can maximize student success. You may find that questions in this chapter and their answers help you reflect on what service learning means to you and what forms it can take for the young people you work with. For example, you may find yourself considering the meaning of community and how it will need to be defined to best serve your ideas. Or you might think about what forms of service will be most appealing or effective in your classroom. Of all of these questions, perhaps the most fundamental is: “What exactly is service learning?”

A Definition of Service Learning

Service learning can be defined in part by what it does for your students. When service learning is used in a structured way that connects classroom content, literature, and skills to community needs, students will:

- apply academic, social, and personal skills to improve the community.
- make decisions that have real, not hypothetical, results.
- grow as individuals, gain respect for peers, and increase civic participation.
- experience success no matter what their ability level.
- gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their community, and society.
- develop as leaders who take initiative, solve problems, work as a team, and demonstrate their abilities while and through helping others.

These important and documented academic and social results have helped validate service learning as a valuable, respected, and widely recognized teaching method. They may be why you're using service learning already or looking for ways to introduce it into your classroom, program, or youth group.

Wherever you plan on using service learning, you're going to need a solid definition to guide you in your specific situation. Rather than starting from scratch to create your own definition, you may want or need to tailor a general definition of service learning to reflect the specific needs of your students, curriculum, and community. While the essential structure and process of service learning stays the same, the resulting activities take a great variety of forms. In a school context and in other learning situations, **service learning can be defined as a research-based teaching method where guided or classroom learning is applied through action that addresses an authentic community need in a process that allows for youth initiative and provides structured time for reflection on the service experience and demonstration of acquired skills and knowledge.** This definition also works in nontraditional, less formal educational environments such as after-school

programs and youth groups. In these settings, staff find meaningful opportunities to infuse the experience of helping in the community with an acknowledgment of what is also being learned.

Before You Start: Frequently Asked Questions

Defining service learning is only the beginning and often leads to other important questions that need to be answered before you can start using or refining service learning. These are some common questions that are asked during my workshops.

Q: How is service learning different from community service or volunteer work?

Service learning differs from other forms of community service or volunteer work because the education of students and young people is always at its core. Students actively participate in the process of understanding, integrating, and applying knowledge from various subject areas as they work to improve their communities. The question “Why am I learning this?” disappears as students help older people, register voters, or work to restore a fragile ecosystem and see what they've learned in action.

Q: Can service learning be used with everyone? Or is it only for older kids? Or gifted kids?

Service learning works with kindergartners and college students as well as every grade in between. Students of all ages and most ability levels can participate successfully, and almost every subject or skill can be enhanced through the practice of service learning. Because service learning can be applied to almost every subject area, this naturally encourages cross-curricular integration, which can help students grow, retain what they have learned, and improve in several areas simultaneously.

Q: How can I interest my students in service learning?

An important aspect of service learning is student participation in the entire process, beginning with identifying the need, researching the underlying issue, and contributing to plans. When students have a voice in choosing and designing a service experience, they are intrinsically more vested emotionally and intellectually. Since the process of service learning often utilizes

student strengths and talents that may be less apparent in day-to-day lessons, service learning can motivate students to impressive accomplishments both in and out of the classroom. From primary grades through high school, teachers use this method to do more than meet educational needs and fulfill academic standards. Service learning infuses relevance, purpose, and meaning into whatever content is being taught. Students experience enthusiasm for learning as they build on personal and collective skills and talents, while applying their abilities to the common good.

Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. There is within each of us a deep hunger for this type of learning.

—Peter M. Senge, educator and author

Q: Does service learning mean more work for me?

Initially, as you're learning to use service learning as a teaching method and finding ways to integrate more engaging and youth-driven ideas into your curriculum, you may find that it takes more time than a typical lesson. However, teachers agree that as they become more adept and confident with the practice, curricular connections and possibilities for worthwhile experiences and community partnerships appear much more easily. More than likely, you'll also find your own levels of engagement and enthusiasm reflect that of the young people you work with and guide through service learning. The academic results and accomplishments in the community well reward the effort for everyone involved.

Q: Service learning means reaching out to the community. What is community? How do I define it?

Any discussion of service learning is going to include many references to community. Service learning helps students build and improve community, yet sometimes the who or what of community is unclear. *Community*

can have different meanings in service learning that are influenced by geography, culture, situation, and need, so its definition often depends on the nature of the service learning activity or who's doing the defining.

For some schools, service learning activities may be working toward improving interpersonal relationships or safety on the school campus, establishing cross-age tutoring programs, or beautifying the grounds. *Community* in this case may be defined as the school campus and population, which includes the immediate surrounding area, parents, and any outside agencies assisting with the issues being addressed.

Other schools extend their communities geographically and socially to include the surrounding neighborhood, city, or region. Some communities are international in nature, even if students never leave the school grounds. Examples of off-site locations for service learning include: a local watershed to help with plant restoration, a refugee center where students assist with child care during adult English language classes, or a radio station where students record public service announcements. In these situations, *community* usually includes agency partners.

Whatever is included in your definition of *community*, students engaging in service learning will come to know that community develops and builds through interaction, reciprocal relationships, and knowledge of people, places, organizations, governments, and systems. Through service learning, the often elusive idea of "community" takes shape and has a more tangible meaning for all involved. Recognizing and becoming active in a community builds a true foundation for civic responsibility that lasts well beyond school years.

Q: I understand what service learning means, but what does service mean?

In the context of service learning, "service" is the implementation of a plan, designed or influenced by students, that combines classroom learning with meeting an authentic community need. In some cases, the need is apparent and even urgent—for example, when elementary students rescue duck eggs from a rice field just prior to harvest. In other cases, the students may be supplementing or supporting a larger community effort—for example, by taking dictation of letters for elders in a residential facility or mapping an emergency evacuation route for a rural area. In all cases, service is

meant to evoke the spirit of caring in those involved as well as provide a constructive context for their knowledge.

Q: Are there different kinds or categories of service?

Service can take many forms. Usually, though, the “service” in service learning can be classified as direct service, indirect service, advocacy, or research.

- *Direct Service:* Students’ service directly affects and involves the recipients. The interactions are person-to-person and face-to-face, such as tutoring younger children or working with refugees. Students engaged in direct service learn about caring for others who are different in age or experience, develop problem-solving skills by following a sequence from beginning to end, and see the “big picture” of a social justice issue. Interacting with animals is also included in direct service, as is on-site environmental work, such as restoring a wetland area or constructing park benches.
- *Indirect Service:* With indirect activities students do not see the recipients, however, their actions benefit the community or environment as a whole. Examples can include stocking a food pantry, donating picture books to a preschool literacy program, collecting clothing for families living in a shelter, or creating a newsletter for a retirement community. Students engaging in indirect service learn about cooperation, working as a team, taking on different roles, organizing, and prioritizing. They also gain specific skills and knowledge that relate to academic content reinforced through application.
- *Advocacy:* The intent of advocacy is to create awareness of or promote action on an issue of public interest. Central to the word is *voc*, which is Latin for *voice*. Through advocacy students provide a voice for an issue, particularly when members of a population may not be able to speak for themselves. Related activities include writing letters, sponsoring a town meeting, performing a play, public speaking. Student advocates learn about perseverance and understanding rules, systems, and processes. They also experience civic engagement and working with adults.
- *Research:* Research activities involve students finding, gathering, and reporting on information in the public interest. For example, students may develop surveys or conduct formal studies, evaluations, experiments, or interviews. They may test water or soil, check the speed of cars passing by their school, or conduct environmental surveys. The students in the Introduction who surveyed local elms for Dutch elm disease are a good example of this kind of service. By participating in research-based service learning, students learn how to gather information, make discriminating judgments, and work systematically. This leads to enhanced skills in organization, assessment, and evaluation.

We need your service, right now, at this moment in history. I’m not going to tell you what your role should be; that’s for you to discover. But I am asking you to stand up and play your part. I am asking you to help change history’s course.

—President Barack Obama, upon signing the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, 2009

Q: Is one type of service learning better than another?

Each of the service categories offers unique benefits to the community and to the students. When the underlying causes and effects of an issue are investigated and understood, all types of service can provoke questions that continue to engage students in study and learning. Students involved in service continually apply and develop their knowledge in ways that meet and enrich the academic curriculum.

That said, a caution is worth noting related to indirect service. If students who have the ability to experience all four forms of service only have indirect opportunities, a subtle message may be communicated: that we can keep issues and problems distant or at arm’s length. Research confirms, particularly with high school students, that direct service and advocacy have the greatest long-term impact on knowledge gained and personal value recognized. Also, younger children are developmentally prone to learning best with concrete involvement.

Q: What do I do if I've been assigned to coordinate service learning for my grade/school/organization?

Celebrate! Having a coordinator is advantageous in many ways, particularly since this person (you) can lead the faculty or staff in becoming better informed about service learning through professional development opportunities. You can keep service learning prominent in the minds of administrators and teachers. A coordinator usually provides encouragement, resources, and collegial conversations that support the ongoing efforts of teachers, both new to and experienced with service learning.

This book can be your guidebook in this endeavor. It is designed with numerous activities that can be used to teach the service learning pedagogy in short and long interactive presentations. The questions and responses can be a starting point for ongoing conversations. The blueprint and forms in chapter 2 and chapter 3 provide tools so teachers can more easily concentrate on student engagement, and the process of service learning and youth leadership—the heart of service learning—can be developed. Curricular maps, service learning scenarios, and annotated bibliographies within the thematic chapters all give you, the coordinator, what you need at your fingertips. Part Three, has numerous ideas and suggestions for coordinators (page 238). Additionally, a Resource section offers additional ways to connect with and participate in the growing international service learning community (page 257).

Q: Does service learning develop youth leadership?

Absolutely. A well-designed service learning experience affords ample opportunities for students to consider their own ideas and those of others, think critically about what occurs, anticipate possible outcomes, adjust plans, articulate their intentions in both written and verbal forms, and assess the outcomes of their endeavors—all essential leadership skills. Every form of communication is enhanced in the process: listening, speaking, writing, and calculating, as well as using symbolism, body language, and interpretation. Through a series of service learning experiences, the transferable nature of this skill development becomes apparent, and students accumulate expertise. Leadership competencies surface, as well as areas for further improvement and strengthening. At all times,

it is the role of the teacher or adult facilitator to note the areas where students need to develop, and to provide that development. Do students need to learn interviewing skills? Are students prepared to analyze a survey that they are soon to complete? Who in the community can assist youth to prepare a press release or to contact a school board representative or legislator? Service learning is truly leadership in action.

Q: Does involvement in service learning help students stay in school?

Research confirms that when asked, a majority of students identified as “dropouts” stated that they would have stayed in school if their classes included the process of service learning or pedagogies like service learning. This makes sense. As students experience the relevance of the learning process, take on roles and responsibilities that contribute to successful collective outcomes, and are depended upon by others, they tend to want to participate. They stay engaged and involved in learning. When the process is further enhanced by students’ ability to use their inherent and developing skills and talents, the formula for success is strengthened. Service learning fosters engaging teaching practices, and engagement is how students learn best.



A survey in the 2006 study *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts* revealed that 81 percent of respondents said that “if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning . . . it would have improved my chances of graduating from high school.”

Truly engaged learning utilizes analytical thinking, creative thinking, and practical thinking. In his article, “What Is an ‘Expert Student?’”^{*} psychologist Robert Sternberg describes these three components to achieving “successful intelligence”: analytical thinking, creative thinking, and practical thinking. Consider how much class time focuses on analytical thinking alone. Adding the creative thinking component draws upon students’ talents and skills, while expanding their base

^{*} R. J. Sternberg, “What Is an ‘Expert Student?’” *Educational Researcher* Vol. 32, No. 8 (2003): 5–9.

of knowledge. Creativity broadens analytical skills by adding new perspectives and “out of the box” cognitive processes. Practical thinking answers the question, “Why am I learning this?,” which illuminates purpose. Practical thinking is also the key to integrating the analytical and the creative, spurring the learner to apply his or her knowledge in fresh or new ways.

A pitcher cries for water to carry
And a person for work that is real.

—Marge Piercy, *from To Be of Use*

Sternberg continues that we can elevate the intent of education by teaching children “not only to think well, but also wisely.” Can we move students toward wisdom? As defined by Sternberg, “Wisdom, the opposite of foolishness, is the use of successful intelligence and experience toward the attainment of a common good.” What a great encapsulation of what service learning can be!

Q: Can service learning inform students of possible careers?

Students can learn about countless careers through service learning, which adds an exciting dimension for our young people that could otherwise be missed. Most service learning experiences introduce students to community members from varied backgrounds who work in government, business, and nonprofit agencies. Here are some examples: A news reporter meets with students as they prepare to work in a food pantry and explains how the press covers the issue of homelessness. Students who provide tutoring for children with special needs are introduced to careers in speech and art therapy. While building a home with Habitat for Humanity, students work alongside skilled professionals installing plumbing and electricity. Every service learning experience can also connect students with government agencies and expose a range of opportunities for public service, including working with an environmental or agricultural agency or developing policy that protects our aging community.

I’ve had the great fortune to assist kids in developing leadership skills and exploring career goals through service learning experiences. As one high

school participant approached graduation, I asked what he planned to study in college. James responded, “Business.” I admit I felt a twinge of disappointment, because I believed he could make such a meaningful contribution to the world of social services. Then he enlightened me by adding, “What’s really great is that I’ve seen directly how many nonprofit organizations lack the ability to create good business plans. As a professional I will be able to contribute my time and help them.” What a pursuit! We need service-minded youth approaching every profession to continue contributing their breadth of skills and knowledge to our communities. Service learning connects students with a future rich in meaningful work and civic involvement.

What Makes Service Learning Successful?

To maximize the value and benefits of the service learning process, understanding the K–12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice makes all the difference. Any outstanding recipe calls for the finest ingredients. As you feed and nurture the service learning process with these standards, students are better able to reap the rewards of the experience. Is each standard always a part of a service learning design? Ideally, yes. Research has verified that when all of these elements are present as the base criteria for service learning, the likelihood for significant impact on the students is greater.* However, service learning is a process, and every activity and experience is unique. So depending on the particular design and what approach you take, some of these standards may be more evident than others. Still, the more familiar you, your students, and your community partners become with service learning strategies, the more likely that all of these standards will be seamlessly integrated into the process. Keep in mind that the responsibility for infusing these standards in an activity rests primarily on the teachers or other adults, while students focus on progressing through the stages of service learning.

* S. H. Billig, “Does Quality Really Matter? Testing the New K–12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice.” In B. E. Moely, S. H. Billig, and B. A. Holland (Eds.), *Advances in Service-Learning: Vol. 9. Creating Our Identities in Service-Learning and Community Engagement* (pp. 131–157). Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2009.

K–12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice*

What are the elements that ensure a successful service learning experience? (See form on page 47.)

1. Meaningful Service. Service learning actively engages students in significant and personally relevant service activities. Students identify, investigate, learn about, and articulate a genuine, recognized community need. This need is often verified through the media, surveys, observation, or interviews with informed community partners. With well thought-out plans, students can see their actions having verifiable consequences as they learn and apply academic skills and knowledge. When a service experience has meaning and students see the purpose, engagement and action are sure to follow.

2. Link to Curriculum. When service learning is employed as a teaching method to meet designated content and skills, academics come alive. Knowledge is applied with transparency, allowing students to make explicit connections between subject matter and application within the context of community. This stimulates an intrinsic desire in students to learn the content and skills needed to be effective. While the subject matter and social context may change, the skills learned and practiced by students are transferable. Ideally, the learning and the service weave together and reinforce each other, with the service informing the curriculum and the curriculum informing the service.

3. Reflection. Through service learning, students participate in systemic processes that integrate cognitive thinking—related to social issues and their lives—with empathetic response. This blend of affective and cognitive thought deepens the service learning as students apply and transfer new understandings of themselves, others, and the world around them. If we want to cultivate deep thinkers—young people who are able to personalize what they learn and see, take on a challenge with consideration of self and others, and recognize the need to hit the pause button on a regular basis in this fast-paced world—then reflection is

essential. While all of the standards have importance, “reflection” is a word oft repeated in this book. Many examples of approaches and prompts to reflection are included to show that it is an imperative in all education methods today.

4. Diversity. Imagine all the possible ways service learning can expose young people to the concept of diversity. Whether it involves interfacing with a community partner, an elder in a retirement community, a veteran just returning from war, a recent immigrant, or a government official, participation in service learning provides exposure to a range of backgrounds, perspectives, and ways of thinking and solving problems. Rather than examine the human condition from a textbook, students learn the way they learn best: through experience, which replaces stereotypes with accurate information, opens the mind, and creates memorable events. The term *diversity* takes on a deeper meaning and relevance. Social and cultural boundaries lessen as relationships resonate with mutual respect.

5. Youth Voice. Young people need ample opportunities to express their ideas and opinions, and to make constructive choices and see the results. Service learning enables students to take initiative, make decisions, interact with community representatives, learn about the role of government in social issues, develop critical-thinking skills, put their ideas into action, and assess and evaluate what happened. Students meet significant age-appropriate challenges with tasks that require thinking, initiative, problem solving, and responsibility in an environment safe enough for them to make mistakes and to succeed. Responsibility means being “response-able,” or “able to respond” to local and global issues that matter; responsibility is what develops an active populace. When young people recognize their vital role in improving society, working for social justice, and caring for the environment, then they truly understand the concept of democracy. These abilities, when strengthened through repeated service learning experiences, amount to youth leadership. Students recognize how participation and the ability to respond to authentic needs improves the quality of life in the community, which may lead to a lifelong ethic of service and civic participation.

* From the K–12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice, National Youth Leadership Council, www.nylc.org.

6. Partnerships. Students participate in the development of partnerships and share responsibility with community members, parents, and other students, as well as with people from organizations, business, and government. These relationships give students opportunities to interact with people of diverse backgrounds in diverse settings. Through these dynamics, students and community members learn about each other and gain mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation. There is an exchange of information, ideas, and skills among all participants in the service learning experience. Reciprocity exists when each person sees the other as having something to share, when roles and responsibilities stay clarified, and when a shared vision moves the group forward.

7. Progress Monitoring. “Did our service learning matter? Did we make a difference?” Even the best service learning intentions can fall flat or require a makeover. Since the service learning experience typically takes place in a youth group or classroom, which are laboratories for learning and efficacy, if something goes awry benefits may still occur. For example, students can learn about the need for perseverance, or find a better strategy to turn a good idea into a city policy. And of course some service learning outcomes appear to be stellar; in fact, everyone may agree. In both circumstances, how are the students to know for certain this outcome? With progress monitoring, students set a baseline of what the status quo is when they begin the process and learn the skill of comparing this with the results. Along the way they observe, report, and calculate to have a sense of where they are headed, allowing for modifications even while in process. When community partners are also engaged in progress monitoring, students can improve their methods as they capture the voices of community.

8. Duration and Intensity. How long should the service learning process last? As long as necessary for a quality experience. A sufficient duration allows the participants to move through the Five Stages of Service Learning—investigation, preparation and planning, action, reflection, and demonstration—with ample time to authenticate and address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes. The emphasis is on process rather than aiming for a premeditated goal.

Service learning is about moving forward with purpose, while allowing for flexibility, inevitable detours, and unexpected occurrences that are inherent to “real world” participation.

No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline.

—Kofi Annan, *Former Secretary-General, United Nations*

The Process of Service Learning: The Big Picture

At this point, you’ve thought about what service learning means, how you may choose to define community, what forms of service might work best for your students, and the standards or ingredients that lead toward impactful experiences. Now it’s time to look at the actual process, the sequence the students follow. It is the basis of every service learning activity. If we are keeping in mind that the standards are the ingredients, these Five Stages of Service Learning are the recipe. The essential and interdependent five stages of successful service learning are:

- Investigation
- Preparation and Planning
- Action
- Reflection
- Demonstration

Together these constitute a process that is key to students’ effectiveness and critical to their learning transferable skills and content. Even though each stage is examined separately, keep in mind that they’re linked together and often experienced simultaneously. Visualize how overlays are used in an anatomy book to reveal what is occurring in the human body system by system. Each stage of service learning in action is like one of these overlays, revealing one part of an interdependent whole. As you read on, you will find

elaboration of each of these stages along with reproducible documents to use with your students as they progress from ideas to accomplishment.

Investigation

Nothing has such power to broaden the mind as the ability to investigate systematically and truly all that comes under thy observation in life.

—*Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor*

All service learning begins with investigation: 1) investigation of the resources within the student population, called a “Personal Inventory,” and 2) investigation of the community need. A personal investigation is of great value, during which students interview each other to identify and consolidate an inventory of each person’s interests, skills, and talents. This list, often kept in a visible location in the classroom, is then referenced, employed, and developed while going through all service learning stages. Next, young people identify a community need of interest and begin their research to authenticate this need. During this process, often called “social analysis,” they assess the need by designing a survey, conducting interviews, using varied media such as books and the Internet, and drawing from personal experience and observation. Students then document the extent and nature of this need, and establish a baseline for monitoring their progress in meeting it. Community partners are often identified in this stage. If a community partner identifies the need, students still investigate to authenticate and document this need.

Preparation and Planning

I cannot predict the wind but I can have my sail ready.

—*E. F. Schumacher, author*

Preparation and planning cover a wide variety of activities, as teacher and students set the stage for learning and social action. Having recognized their interests, skills, and talents, and identified the need

to be addressed, students now learn more about the topic. As this occurs, teachers and students begin to note what skills need to be acquired or improved to have greater effectiveness. Students explore, research, and discuss the topic by using books and the Internet, by interviewing experts—which exposes young people to various careers—and often by going on field trips. They examine primary source materials (such as a school electrical bill if their intent is to reduce the school’s carbon footprint). They may enact role plays or more complex simulations (such as turning the classroom into an Ellis Island waiting room in preparation for a focus on immigrants). In this process of active learning and critical thinking, students grow to understand the underlying problem as well as related subject matter. Analysis, creativity, and practicality lead to plans for action. Here again, the class draws upon their personal inventory of skills, talents, and interests to shape the service to come. Students may also find and establish partnerships with other teachers and classrooms, local agencies, colleges or universities, or national groups that offer resources.

Action

If you need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of your arm.

—*Yiddish proverb*

Action is the direct result of preparation and planning. Solid preparation enables students to confidently carry out their plan of action, applying what they have learned to benefit the community. Perhaps they plant flowers to beautify school grounds, collect school supplies to send to students in a local shelter and or to an orphanage in Africa, or create a recycling campaign—the possibilities are limitless. Always, this action is intended to have value, purpose, and meaning as students continue to acquire academic skills and knowledge. These unique experiences have real consequences and offer a safe environment to learn, make mistakes, and succeed.

The plan may be carried out over the course of an academic year, a semester, two weeks, or a single day. The action may move sequentially from initiation to

completion, or students may implement the initial stages during a semester in high school, for example, and a new class may resume the process, adding their own ideas. This allows for continuity, which may be necessary to address a complex or time-consuming need. In all cases, the duration of involvement needs to be sufficient for depth of learning and totality of experience. As the students put their plan in motion, they come to recognize vividly how classroom lessons fit into their daily lives and shape the lives of others.

During the action stage, students continue to develop knowledge and skills. In fact, the action stage often illuminates a piece of information or skill that is missing, and the students eagerly work to learn what is needed to be more effective in their community action. Also the idea of “resources” takes shape as students learn about and contact government and community agencies, interact with new people in new ways, and gain a novel perspective on their environment. Over the course of the experience, students raise questions that lead to a deeper understanding of the societal context of their efforts. They witness the real results of their actions and observe their strengths and attributes in relation to those of others, which can give them a new appreciation of their classmates and of people they meet who have varied roles and responsibilities. By taking action, young people identify themselves as community members and stakeholders and, over time, learn how to work within social institutions. Transforming plans into action enables them to use what is inherently theirs—ideas, energy, talents, skills, knowledge, enthusiasm, and concern for others and their natural surroundings—as they contribute to the common good.

Reflection

To look backward for a while is to refresh the eye, to restore it, and to render it more fit for its prime function of looking forward.

—Margaret Fairless Barber, author

Reflection is one of the standards in service learning as well as one of the five stages. It is a vital and ongoing process that integrates learning and experience

with personal growth and awareness. Using reflection, students consider how the experience, knowledge, and skills they are acquiring relate to their own lives and communities. The academic program is often so jam-packed that it’s easy to miss the meaning behind the details or within the experience. Reflection is a pause button that gives students the time to explore the impact of what they are learning and its effect on their thoughts and future actions.

In the course of reflecting, students put cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of experience into the larger context of self, the community, and the world. This helps them assess their skills, develop empathy for others, and understand the impact of their actions on others and on themselves. To really work, reflection must go beyond students simply reporting or describing what they are doing or have done. When students can compare their initial assumptions with what they have seen and experienced in the real world, reflection can be a transforming experience. They can ask questions and probe deeper into an issue, leading the class to further levels of investigation and understanding. They can use poetry or music to express a change in feelings that occurred or their appreciation of a classmate. They can also consider what they would change or improve about a particular activity.

While reflection in service learning is structured, with the times and activities usually established by the teacher, reflection also occurs spontaneously, stimulated by a student comment or class discussion of a newspaper article. Reflection may occur before, during, and after implementation through the use of different approaches and strategies. Final reflections may include ways to gauge results that further understanding and synthesis. Community partners and others involved in this reciprocal exchange may also share their reflections. In all cases, feedback from adults helps students use reflection to elevate their ability to observe, question, and apply their accumulated knowledge to other situations. To be effective, adults who interact with the students must model reflective behaviors. You’ll find that soon, students can devise their own strategies for reflection and lead each other through the reflective process.